

Delta Stewardship Council

March 10, 2011 Public Workshop

Panel A: Protecting, Restoring, and Enhancing the Delta Ecosystem

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**1. From your perspective, what are the top three priorities the Delta Plan should include in order to:**

*Manage the Delta's water and environmental resources and the water resources of the state over the long term? [Water Code Section 85020(a)]*

- Provide for the inclusion of the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) as part of the Delta Plan. The BDCP conveyance improvements will improve flexibility in Delta water operations to work over the long-term, and will reduce conflict with fisheries in the Delta. New conveyance, combined with habitat restoration and reduction of other stressors will contribute to recovery of listed species.
- Focus Delta Plan policies and recommendations on the Delta improvements to address conveyance, habitat restoration and enhancement, implementing solutions to Delta stressors, developing a comprehensive strategy of promoting strategic levee investments, and supporting and incorporating initiatives addressing Delta emergency preparedness and response. The Delta Reform Act of 2009 accomplished a great deal, and the Delta Stewardship Council should focus on the requirements of that legislation and use a phased approach to implementation before considering additional recommendations to the Legislature.
- Rely on existing statewide or regional policies and programs for promoting good water management, and request periodic updates on progress and performance. A variety of state mandates and local/regional efforts already exist pertaining to water use efficiency, recycled water and groundwater management, as a few examples. In many of these categories, the state, working with interested stakeholders, has already developed policies and recommendations, and in some cases performance measures, in the last few years. Any successful promotion by the Delta Stewardship Council of sound water management practices must recognize and seek to advance these efforts.

**2. From your perspective, what are the top three priorities the Delta Plan should include in order to:**

*Protect, maintain, and, where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment, including, but not limited to, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities? [Public Resources Code Section 29702(b)]*

*Restore the Delta ecosystem, including its fisheries and wildlife, as the heart of a healthy estuary and wetland ecosystem? [Water Code Section 85020(c)]*

- Provide for the inclusion of the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) as part of the Delta Plan. The Delta Plan and BDCP need to include the right combination of physical habitat improvements, actions addressing environmental and water quality stressors, and water project operational improvements to protect, maintain and enhance the overall quality of the Delta environment.
- Include a comprehensive strategy of promoting strategic levee investments.

**3. From your perspective, what are the top three priorities the Delta Plan should include in order to:**

*Develop new or improved aquatic and terrestrial habitat and protect existing habitats to advance the goal of restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem? [Water Code Section 85022(d)(5)]*

*Include measures that promote all of the following characteristics of a healthy Delta ecosystem Water Code Section 85302(c):*

- *Viable populations of native resident and migratory species*
- *Functional corridors for migratory species*
- *Diverse and biologically appropriate habitats and ecosystem processes*
- *Reduced threats and stresses on the Delta ecosystem*
- *Conditions conducive to meeting or exceeding the goals in existing species recovery plans and state and federal goals with respect to doubling salmon populations?*

- Implement a strategic approach to habitat acquisition and development, and focus initial efforts on developing projects that provide the best early benefits, such as habitat projects in the Yolo Bypass and Suisun Marsh.
- Need to restore ecosystem processes at a scale that establishes dynamic habitat gradients that adjust to episodic and anthropogenic (man-made) events - as well as climate change. The sooner we establish accreting tidal plains, the greater our chances of sustainable ecosystems.
- When developing habitat need to consider and resolve local issues (economic, social, etc.) and also make sure habitat plans are compatible with local needs while being consistent with water management approaches.